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SUBJECT: Why Nigeria's PDP Governors Could Not Lose

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CLASSIFIED BY DCM TIMOTHY D. ANDREWS. REASON: 1.5 (D).

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: The PDP's national convention (Refs C and D) was more competitive than caucuses that renominated every PDP governor regardless of his popularity or lack of it. However, this praise is faint indeed, as the gubernatorial caucuses were blatantly rigged while the national convention was more subtly manipulated. Each iteration of intrigue and manipulation helps establish the context for the next one, and mutual knowledge of one another's compromising behavior (not love of democracy) is the tie that binds many senior political figures. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) While predicting a first-round victory for President Olusegun Obasanjo at the January 3-5 national convention of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), Deputy Senate President Ibrahim Mantu January 3 told DCM that the vote would not be as lopsided as it was in late December's gubernatorial primaries. Mantu commented that over 3,000 delegates had cast ballots in the "primary" (caucus) that returned him as the PDP nominee for the Plateau Central Senatorial District. Since each senator represented about one-third of the state, Mantu continued, it would have been proportionate for the gubernatorial "primary" to feature approximately 9,000 delegates. Instead, Governor Joshua Dariye was returned as the PDP nominee with only 212 delegates participating in the caucus, most of whom were party or state government officials beholden to him. PDP members in Plateau had directly elected just 51 delegates (three from each of the 17 local government areas), and Dariye had a strong hold on most of them also.

[13.](#) (C) Mantu expressed disgust at the lack of fairness, transparency and public accountability embedded in the structure of the gubernatorial caucuses. The "non-incumbent aspirants who went to court to challenge the procedure were right," Mantu said. Never in his 23 years in politics had he seen such a blatantly rigged nomination process. The party's national convention would be open and transparent, however, Mantu averred.

[14.](#) (C) He traced the origins of the gubernatorial nominating process to the PDP convention of November 2001 that ousted Barnabas Gemade as party chairman, replacing him with Audu Ogbeh. It was during the course of that convention that amendments to the PDP constitution were adopted that reduced the elected delegates to gubernatorial primaries from one per ward to three per Local Government Area and increased the number of ex-officio delegates. The amendments were adopted by voice vote with virtually none of the delegates ever having seen the text, to say nothing of appreciating its implications, said Mantu.

[15.](#) (C) COMMENT: Each LGA consists of least 20 wards, and the average is about 24, so the new amendment cut popularly-elected delegates by a factor of eight while increasing sharply those likely to be beholden to incumbent governors. This was part of the price the Presidency paid to gain incumbent governors' support for dumping Gemade. They knew (Ref B) that Gemade would help them return to power and feared Ogbeh's reputation for integrity, so they insisted on rules that would make it difficult for any challenger to unseat them. These changes also gave the governors increased power over their delegations to the national convention, creating the circumstances that convinced aggrieved governors that they could successfully challenge the President (Ref D). END COMMENT.

[16.](#) (C) While lauding Ogbeh as "honest" and "principled," Mantu commented that his accession nonetheless was regrettably marred by the same sort of manipulation that had brought Gemade to power before him (when the Presidency had wanted to prevent Sunday Awoniyi from gaining the chairmanship). When one gains office through intrigue, Mantu continued, the victory is tarnished, and one lacks the authority to act forcefully. One may also be

forced to compromise one's principles in support of one's patron, Mantu suggested.

17. (C) COMMENT: Mantu makes a trenchant point; only those genuinely elected in an open and transparent process possess clear moral authority (mandate) to govern. Everyone else is diminished. Public corruption plays a critical role also. Many senior politicians have indulged in activities that they would not want publicized and are thus compromised. Mutual knowledge of this compromise establishes limits on what politicians can do: Politician A exposes Politician B's acceptance of bribes at the risk of B telling the story of A's contract over-invoicing scheme. Since money drives the wheels of politics and public corruption is a faster and easier route to wealth than legitimate business, relatively "clean" politicians tend to be a small minority and thus unable to effect systemic change. Meanwhile, many elites work within this framework of mutual compromise; knowledge that everyone else has a skeleton in the closet makes one less worried about one's own secret shame. Corruption surprises no one and, as long as it is not too blatant, arouses little indignation. The Lagos-based "Guardian" January 6 carried a photo of a policeman helping someone carry a heavily-laden "Ghana-Must-Go" bag. The woven plastic "Ghana-Must-Go" Bag is used to carry large sums of cash and has become the symbol of money's role in politics. The image of an officer of the law helping to enable corruption may strike the Western observer as ironic or amusing, but most Nigerian elites find it utterly mundane and normal.

18. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: President Obasanjo may or may not be personally free of corruption. Views on that subject vary, and we've seen nothing that would indict him. However, his acquiescence to associates' use of monetary blandishments and his own penchant for undermining the position of fellow PDP members with whom he disagrees do nothing to build a stronger base for genuine participatory democracy here. The allegation of Obasanjo's intent to stop the candidacies of some incumbent governors (Ref D) that sparked the governors' insurrection at the national convention quite likely was a fabrication by an Obasanjo antagonist at State House itself. But the governors believed the story because of Obasanjo's previous efforts to unseat (or prevent the otherwise probable election of) fellow party leaders with whom he was in conflict.

19. (C) COMMENT CONCLUDED: The PDP's national convention was more competitive than the gubernatorial nomination process that Mantu derided, but that is vanishingly faint praise. Balloting and vote-counting were transparent and open, but not much else related to the convention was. The critical accreditation process was obviously manipulated, with respect both to its timing and the acceptance of approximately 250 delegates (who were in no original delegate count we ever saw and whose votes ultimately were superfluous, Ref C). Moreover, a requirement that each delegate thumbprint his/her ballot made the secret ballot far less so. In November of 2001, we said (ref B) that it was "now up to the President and the new party hierarchy to continue to mend today's wounds and, perhaps, shift the party to a more transparent and democratic tomorrow." It still is.  
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